



# *Tabebuia impetiginosa* Purple Tabebuia<sup>1</sup>

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This briefly deciduous tree reaches 15 to 20 feet in height and has a fairly open canopy (Fig. 1). Branching is often sparse allowing turf and other sun loving plants to grow beneath the canopy. The dark green, palmately compound, five-inch-long leaves are joined in late winter or early spring by the showy, trumpet-shaped blooms, appearing in dense, rose-pink to purple, terminal panicles. Trees will have a better form if trained to a single trunk and staked until they are six to eight feet tall, at which time they can be allowed to grow naturally.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Tabebuia impetiginosa*

**Pronunciation:** tab-eh-BOO-yuh

im-pet-ih-jih-NO-suh

**Common name(s):** Purple Tabebuia

**Family:** *Bignoniaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree; no proven urban tolerance

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

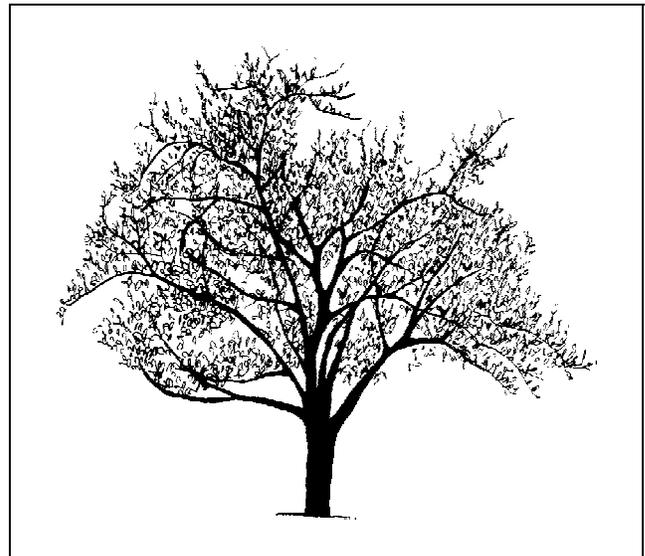


Figure 1. Middle-aged Purple Tabebuia.

## DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 12 to 18 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** palmately compound

**Leaflet margin:** serrate

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Leaflet shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong

**Leaflet venation:** banchidodrome; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaflet blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** purple

**Flower characteristics:** spring flowering; very showy

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** elongated; pod

**Fruit length:** 6 to 12 inches; 3 to 6 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem; persistent on the tree

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** medium

### Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** moderate

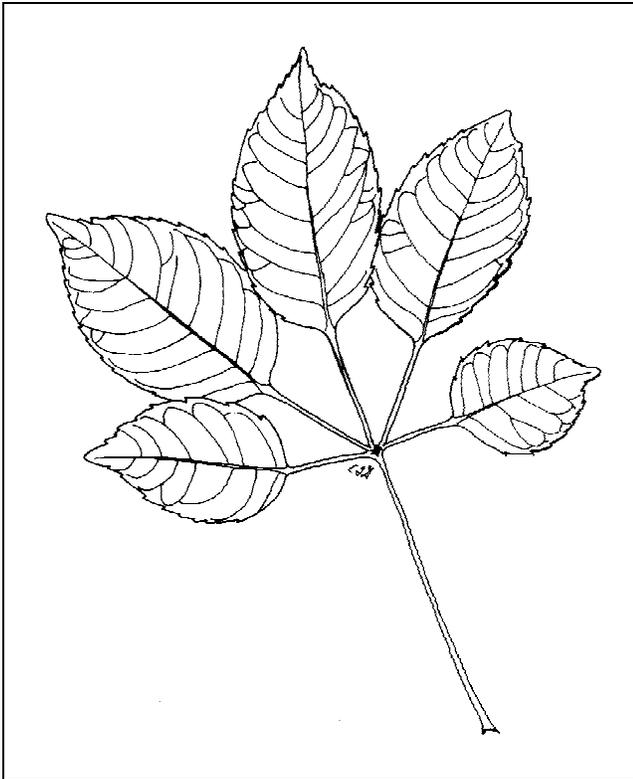


Figure 3. Foliage of Purple Tabebuia.

## Pest and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

## Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time

**Pest resistance:** no pests are normally seen on the tree

## USE AND MANAGEMENT

Use this small tree in an area where any small tree can be used. It might be best to locate it in a shrub border or other out-of-the-way place since the canopy is quite thin, even in full sun. It is probably not as well suited for specimen planting as the other *Tabebuia*s.

Purple *Tabebuia* should be grown in full sun on almost any well-drained soil but trees respond especially well to rich soil. Established trees are highly drought-tolerant.

Propagation is by seed, cuttings, or layering. Plants flower at an early age.